# **Chapter 4 - Food Delivery System and Warrant Accountability and Control**

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#### FOOD DELIVERY SYSTEM

The food delivery system used by the WIC Program provides supplemental foods free of charge to participants. These foods are provided by retail WIC-authorized vendors and mailed food delivery vendors.

#### **Retail Purchase System**

Most participants in the Alaska WIC Program receive WIC foods through a uniform retail purchase system. Under this system, participants obtain supplemental foods by submitting WIC warrants to an authorized vendor.

Local agencies issue automated warrants at the point of certification. Local agencies are not permitted to issue manual warrants. All warrants must be produced by the automated computer system.

Participants receive their warrants in one of two ways:

- The participant or alternate picks up and signs for warrants at a local agency clinic.
- The participant receives warrants in the mail from a local agency, signs a confirmation of receipt of the WIC warrants and returns it to the local agency address. Pre-paid return envelopes are provided by the local agency along with the warrants. Warrants may be mailed to clients when they live off-site in remote areas of the state, with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants, and not accessible year-around by means of a public road. Clients such as these receive other state benefits such as Medicaid, Denali Kid Care and Quest cards through the mail.

Participants receive the supplemental foods listed on their warrants by shopping for WIC-approved foods at an authorized retail vendor that has a current agreement with the Alaska WIC Program. Warrants are presented to the vendor as payment for the WIC foods selected and authorized on the warrant.

#### **Delivery System**

This system is used primarily for isolated or remote rural locations. Local agencies must only use the mail food delivery system when:

- There are no vendors available in the area to serve WIC clients.
- The area does not have a vendor who is able to meet the requirements of the Vendor Agreement, or
- Participants have expressed dissatisfaction with the local authorized vendor, such as repeated failures to maintain adequate inventory of WIC foods, and these complaints have been documented in writing; or
- There are no vendors available in the area to serve WIC clients; or

Retail Food Purchasing System

Mailed Food Delivery System

• The <u>WIC authorized</u> vendor(s) in the area are not required to stock infant formula <u>or infant foods</u> because of a very low number of WIC <u>formula-fedeligible</u> infants in the community. In these cases, the local agency prescribes mail order food packages for infants needing formula; but issues warrants to all other participants living in the community to purchase their WIC foods on-site from the local vendor.

The Alaska WIC Program, through a competitive bid process, contracts with a vendor or vendors to provide the mailed food delivery service. The local clinic prescribes mail order food packages that are transmitted directly to the vendor(s) through a statewide computer system. The vendor processes the orders and ships the food boxes directly to each WIC participant. The participant or parent/guardian is required to sign the packing slip and return it to their WIC clinic to acknowledge receipt of the food box. Pre-paid return envelopes are enclosed with the packing list for each food order.

#### WARRANT ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTROL

The state office in Juneau maintains an inventory by control number of the blank warrant stock kept at the state office. The local agencies are issued warrant stock sequentially by the control number. Local agencies contact the state office to place orders for warrant stock. Warrant stock is sent upon request, with no more than a quarter's worth of stock being sent out at a time. Ideally warrant inventory and issuance are not done by the same staff. When clinics only have one staff person for all functions, there should be increased supervisory oversight of the participant files to ensure program integrity. Quality assurance will be conducted by the State office to monitor program integrity.

Warrant Stock for Local Agencies Warrants are sent to local agencies by certified mail accompanied by a transmittal document, which identifies the warrants. An example of the form is included at the end of this chapter. Another copy of the transmittal document <a href="mailed-separately">may be will be seanned provided electronically or by mail is mailed separately</a> to the local agency. A copy is retained by the state office. Local agency staff must inspect the warrants and verify that all warrants listed have been received. Any discrepancies must be noted on the warrant transmittal documents. The transmittal document must be signed and returned immediately to the state agency.

Stocks of unused warrants must be stored in a secure place which is locked at all times. Access to warrants is limited to those employees authorized to use them. Warrants missing from clinic stock must be immediately reported to the state agency.

Warrants that have been printed but are waiting for client pick up or mailing, are stored in a secure place and only accessed by authorized personnel.

Inventory of warrant stock is done by the state office quarterly. Warrant stocks issued to local agencies are documented on a warrant log by control number. The control numbers are also inputted in the WIC computer system by the state agency. The local agency inventories blank warrant stock by control number on a quarterly basis to reconcile the inventory log with the actual supply on-hand. For agencies with more than one staff, one staff is responsible for maintaining the log and another staff conducts the physical inventory. A sample inventory log is at the end of the chapter.

When printing warrants, examine them to make sure they meet warrant printing standards.

- Confirm that computer symbols appear at the beginning and end of the "MICR" line
- Make certain that the Alaska state seal is printed on the warrant
- Verify that the MICR linve is complete and legible
- Ensure that the MICR line includes numbers only... never text
- Verify that the warrant is valid and not voided in the AKWIC system
- Use extra diligence while printing warrants, especially when "Error Messages" occur during the printing process
- Verify that warrants printed when "Error Messages" occur, are valid and not voided in the AKWIC system
- In cases of printer jams check printer to ensure duplicate warrants were not printed.

#### Voided Warrants

The state agency requires local agencies to shred all warrants that are voided, unless warrants are not in their possession.

Warrants are to be voided for the following reasons:

- Brought back to the local agency by the participant for exchange (for example, a mother who is no longer breastfeeding, and needs warrants for formula).
- Mistake made during warrant issuance, input or printer errors.
- Warrants were preprinted for a participant, and the participant missed the warrant pick-up appointment.
- Warrant(s) reported stolen.(with a police report)
- Warrant(s) are damaged and can not be processed by the store.

  Damaged warrant(s) must be available for the WIC office to physically shred after voiding before another warrant(s) can be reissued.

Voiding Warrants

Warrants that have been voided for input or print errors should be voided in the AKWIC System and shredded before any checks are reissued to the client.

#### Stolen or Lost Warrants

Replacing Lost or Stolen Warrants

Lost

**Warrants** 

#### Stolen Warrants

If a participant reports that warrants originally issued were stolen, the local agency may provide the participant with replacement warrants once a police report is brought into the clinic. Void stolen warrants in the computer and replace them. Keep a copy of the police report in the participant's chart. A client may be reissued no more than one set of stolen WIC warrants in a 6 month period. For example if the client states that 3 of her WIC warrants were stolen from her; you may replace these three warrants

#### Lost Warrants

Warrants, lost after receipt, will no longer be replaced by the Alaska WIC Program starting November 2007. Lost warrants should be voided in the AKWIC system. Educate your clients when enrolling them in WIC through the initial certification and recertification process to treat WIC warrants like cash. Warrants can be replaced in cases of fire. If there are mitigating circumstances where replacement of warrants is valid, notify the Juneau WIC Program office for assistance.

#### **Lost Mailed Warrants**

When mailed warrants have been lost through the mail service, WIC clinics may reissue these. If the client calls to report this problem, lost warrants must be voided and reissued after seven (7) days from the mailing date. If the original set of warrants show up in the client's mail, these warrants should be returned to the WIC office to be shredded. Clients should not use this set of warrants which have already been voided in the AKWIC System.

Warrants reported lost or stolen by participants must be documented by the local agency in the WIC computer system and on the Lost and Stolen WIC Warrant Report form, included at the end of this chapter. The report includes the serial numbers, date lost or stolen (if known), the circumstances surrounding the incident, and the recovery action taken. If theft is suspected, police authorities must be notified immediately and a list of the missing warrant numbers must be distributed to the WIC vendors in the area. Vendors must be told not to honor these warrants, and to report any instances of attempts being made to exchange the warrants to the local agency.

The Lost and Stolen WIC Warrant Report, included at the end of this chapter, must be signed by the participant or participant's parent or guardian. The local agency must give a copy to the participant, parent or

Lost or Stolen Warrant Reports

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guardian, and put the original copy in the participant's file. The participant, parent or guardian must be told that the original warrants are now void and should not be used if they are later found, and intentionally cashing WIC warrants that have been replaced with new warrants is fraud, and can result in disqualification from the WIC Program and the participant may be required to reimburse the Program.

# No Retroactive Warrants

WIC benefits are intended to improve health status based on existing nutrition risk conditions at the time of application. Providing retroactive benefits to clients is not allowed nor is it consistent with the nutritional goals of the WIC Program. The replacement of unused warrants cannot result in the allocation of retroactive food benefits either. The quantity of replacement foods must be based on that portion of foods for which the participant would still be eligible, beginning with the new issue date of the replacement warrant(s). Participants will not be receiving more than two sets of warrant replacements in one year's time.

For example: A participant is issued three sets of warrants covering a three month period. One set is for June 10 through July 10, one set for July 11 through August 11, and one set is for August 12 through September 12. September 12 is the last day of her certification period.

The participant redeems the first set of warrants, then calls the clinic on July 15 to report that her remaining two sets of warrants were stolen. After a three day waiting period, she comes to the clinic on July 18, with a police report stating the warrants were stolen. The remaining two sets of warrants are voided in the computer by the clinic staff, and they fill out a Lost or Stolen Warrant Report and have it signed by the participant. The participant is then issued two new sets of warrants to replace those that were stolen. The new warrant valid dates are July 18 through August 18 and August 19 through September 19. The second set of warrants is valid for seven days after the end of her current certification period. Federal regulations permit extending certification by a period not to exceed 30 days, but such extensions should not be routine. If the participant in this example is eligible for recertification, her new certification period would begin on September 20.

#### **Warrant Issuance and Redemption**

# Separation of Duties

#### Warrant Issuance Procedures

Warrants are issued by local agency CPAs, RDs, coordinators, nutritionists, and authorized clerical staff. Separation of duties is a standard accountability and security practice used when food benefits change hands. All local agencies with multiple staff shall divide certification and issuance duties between CPA staff and non-CPA staff or between staff members so that there is separation in these duties. When clinics only have one staff

person for all functions, there should be increased supervisory oversight of the participant files to ensure program integrity. Quality assurance will be conducted by the State office to monitor program integrity. Quarterly the State office will randomly review 5 charts from the clinics that are staffed by only one person. Additional backup information will be requested from the local agency to verify compliance with Federal regulations. Examples of back up information would consist of copies of the signatures from the client Rights and Responsibilities form and the proof of identification.

-When a WIC staff member travels to provide off-site WIC services:

A separate staff person at the permanent WIC clinic should print and mail food instruments to participants certified at the off-site clinic, ensuring proper documentation has been obtained for each applicant and participant, reducing the likelihood of the creation of fictitious participants and misappropriation of WIC benefits. In cases where there is no other staff member, additional oversight at the state level to assure program integrity will occur.

-When a WIC staff member is also a WIC client or a guardian of a WIC client:

The certification process should be done by another WIC employee following the separation of duties policy. If the WIC staff member as the WIC client or guardian is the only staff member qualified to certify in the clinic or Local Agency, the certification process must be done by another Local Agency. The certifying agency staff will mail the FIs directly to the participant or prescribe mail order food packages that are transmitted directly to the vendor(s) through a statewide computer system.

-When a WIC staff member is certifying close relatives and friends:

Whenever possible other clinic staff should certify and issue food instruments to these individuals. In the case where an agency is so small that this practice is not practical to accommodate, there will be additional oversight at the state level to assure program integrity.

#### Issuance Intervals and Valid Dates

Clinics may issue a participant their warrants at one, two or three month intervals. Each warrant is valid for 30 days.

Signing for Warrants

#### Verification of Receipt of Warrants

Participants must sign a confirmation of receipt of WIC warrants when they receive them. Participants who receive mailed food boxes must sign the enclosed packing slip, which also serves as a receipt, and mail it to their local clinic in the stamped envelope provided with their mailed food box. Signed receipts must be kept in participant files for three years after the issue date. If a participant fails to sign receipts for WIC warrants when they receive them, the WIC office will follow up with the client at the next clinic

visit. A "tickler" in the chart or in the computer to remind the office to have the participant sign the receipt during the next office visit is recommended.

Picking Up Warrants

#### Pick Up at Clinic

Participants or alternates who pick up warrants at a clinic must sign a warrant receipt, which is printed with the warrants by the computer system, verifying that they received the warrants. Signed receipts are kept in the participant's file for three years after the warrant issue dates. Signed warrant receipts may also be kept in separate files as long as warrants can be found and retrieved by client name.

#### Mailed Warrants

Mailed Warrants Participants who receive warrants by mail are asked to sign the receipt which has been mailed with the warrants, and return it to the local agency in the stamped window envelope which was enclosed with the mailed warrants. Signed receipts are kept in the participant's file for three years after the warrant issue dates. Signed warrant receipts may also be kept in separate files as long as warrants can be found and retrieved by client name.

## Mailed Food Boxes

Mailed Food Boxes The packing list, sent in mailed food boxes, serves as the receipt. The packing list should be signed and mailed to the local agency. Stamped window envelopes that show the local agency address which is printed on the packing lists are included in the mailed food boxes for this purpose. Signed receipts are kept in the participant's file for three years after the warrant issue dates.

#### Late Warrant Pick-Up

Late Warrant Pick Up Warrants are issued at the time of pickup and the warrant valid date is effective from the calendar date of issue until the same calendar day of the next month (e.g., June 15 through July 15). The exception is for warrants issued in late January when there would be no corresponding calendar day in February. In this case the computer system will put a late February end date on those warrants.

Local agencies must not issue "partial month" warrants. If a client misses an appointment and is late in picking up warrants, the issue date should be the date the warrants are actually picked up. This may result in the ending date of a set of warrants extending beyond the end date of the current certification period. This is permissible, as federal regulations allow a certification period to be extended for a period not to exceed 30 days in cases where there is difficulty in appointment scheduling.

#### Alternates

Warrant
Pick Up
by
Alternates

At the time of certification, a participant may designate an alternate(s) who is authorized to pick up and redeem warrants for the participant. The

designated alternate must be of legal age. However there are circumstances that would warrant an underage alternate be designated. This should be handled on a case by case basis and documented in the participant record as to the circumstances that necessitate the designation. The name of the alternate must be recorded in the participant's file and the alternate's name is printed on the warrant along with the name of the participant. If the participant is a child, the name of the child's parent or guardian will be printed on the warrant. Participants or guardians wanting to change an alternate can do so at their WIC clinic or by requesting a change over the phone giving some identifying information such as their SSN.

Participants are responsible for educating their designated alternate concerning their alternate's responsibilities especially in the area of WIC warrant pick-up and use of WIC warrants at designated WIC vendors. This may include but would not be limited to: showing up at appointed WIC warrant pick up times, purchasing appropriate WIC food items as shown on current WIC food list, courteous and fair treatment of WIC LA staff and vendor staff, redeeming warrants only during valid dates, and having a valid form of identification.

#### Participant ID for Warrant Redemption

The name of the participant and the alternate, if one has been authorized by the local agency, is printed on the warrant. If the participant is a child, the name of the mother, or other caregiver, authorized to pick up and redeem the warrant is printed on the warrant. Vendors must ask the participant or alternate for a picture/signature identification before accepting the warrant, unless the participant is personally known by the cashier. Examples of participant or alternate identification are driver's license, school ID, or vendor approved identification for cashing checks.

The Alaska WIC Program does not issue or require WIC Identification Cards.

#### Participant Training in Warrant Redemption

Local agencies are required to provide each new WIC participant with training to emphasize the importance of using warrants properly. Training is to include but is not limited to:

- Names and locations of WIC vendors in their area
- Selecting authorized WIC foods: including the new foods and CVV. Information should include, but would not be limited to, identifying the allowable variety/brand of new food items, size containers; and restrictions and items that are not allowed. The Cash-Value Vouchers must also be discussed with participants, appropriate denomination for participant type; and that CVV coupons could be used at participating Farmers' Market vendors and farmstands during the Farmers' Market

Participant Identification

Participant Training in Use of Warrants

season June-October. CVVs may also be redeemed at authorized WIC grocery stores.

- Warrant usage:
  - Using warrants only during valid dates printed on warrant(s) and why this is important
  - Referring to procedures printed on Food List for shopping with WIC warrants
  - Separating foods by warrant at the check stand
  - Signing and dating each warrant after verifying the amount of sale
- Reporting problems to their local agency
- Participant's responsibility for instructing their alternate(s) in procedures for shopping with WIC warrants
- Zero tolerance for fraud and abuse against the WIC Program, programs staff and vendors

The local agency is required to provide participants with a list of WIC foods and of participating vendors in their geographical area.

# Mailing Warrants to Participants

#### Warrants Mailed to Participants

Local clinics have the option of mailing warrants to participants if persons in need of program benefits in rural areas will not be able to participate in the program unless WIC warrants are mailed to them.

Mailing WIC warrants for reasons such as illness, imminent childbirth, inclement weather conditions, distance to travel, high cost of travel, or inability to get to the local agency during clinic hours is permitted. Nutrition education must be provided through literature or through telephone or on-site contacts. Food warrants must be mailed First Class with the Local Agency's address printed on the envelope. This insures that the mailed warrants will be returned to the Local Agency if the warrants can not be delivered because the participant has moved or the address is invalid. Instances arise in which a participant may move or temporarily be absent from his or her place of residence. In these instances, local agencies can mail food instruments to a new or alternate address upon the request of the participant, provided that such request is received by the LA prior to the scheduled date for mailing said warrants.

#### **Monitoring of Warrants**

#### Reconciliation and Monitoring Overview

Warrant Monitoring The warrant monitoring system assures 100 percent disposition of all issued warrants as issued or voided, and as either redeemed or unredeemed. Redeemed food instruments are identified as validly issued, lost, stolen, expired, duplicate, or not matching valid enrollment and issuance. Data is collected and compiled by the state agency. Paid warrant data files are down loaded from the Alaska State Treasury to the state agency. These files are

reconciled on a monthly basis. Discrepancies between issuances and redemptions are investigated and resolved by the state agency.

Each month, a physical inspection of warrants is performed to inspect for improper WIC warrant redemption, which may include:

- Incorrect/altered signature of WIC participant or alternate;
- missing /illegible stamp of the Vendor number;
- incorrect change of dollar amount on the warrant; and
- purchase price is missing or exceeds the maximum amount allowed for the warrant type.

A computer report of warrants redeemed outside valid dates is generated each month. Monetary claims are assessed on vendors accepting warrants outside of valid dates.

Natural
Disasters
and
Emergencies

#### **Natural Disasters and Emergencies**

When circumstances such as natural disasters or emergencies support an extension to food instrument(s) valid dates, a recommendation at the State level will be forwarded for FNS approval. Valid dates may be extended only after FNS approval. The State of Alaska WIC office will contact Local Agencies under these circumstances to communicate the extension dates to use on its FIs and /or to notify area vendors of the circumstances in which warrants may be accepted past the final date to use printed on the warrants.

Instructions for Mailed Food Boxes

#### **Instructions for Participants Receiving Mailed Food Boxes**

Participants who will receive mailed food boxes should be provided the following information and instructions:

- They will receive a food order each month containing the specific foods designated by the State Agency for that month (they are not able to choose the specific types or brands of food they will receive).
- They must sign the packing list enclosed in the box and mail it to the WIC clinic in the envelope provided to verify receipt of the food order.
- A food order may be shipped in one or two boxes, depending upon the contents.
- Any food items listed on the packing slip, but missing from the box, or damaged items, should be reported on the packing list that is mailed to the clinic.

Undelivered Food Boxes

#### **Undelivered Mailed Food Boxes**

If a participant reports that a mailed food box was not received, it will usually be too late for a replacement food box to be mailed for that same month. Generally, the report that a food box has failed to arrive will not be

received by a local agency before the next food boxes are ordered for the following month.

The local agency should verify that the correct, current address has been transmitted to the Mail Order Vendor, and that this address will be used for mailing future food boxes. Local agencies can verify with the Mail Order Vendor that the missing box was mailed and the Electronic Delivery Confirmation tracking number may be checked to verify if the box was delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.

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Unfortunately the missing food box cannot be replaced, as it would result in the participant receiving two food boxes in one month. The clinic should fax copies of all reports of missing food orders, or missing or damaged contents of food boxes, to the State office for follow-up and monitoring of mail order vendor performance.

Reports are available in the WIC computer system for local agencies to monitor shipping dates of MOV food orders for their participants. Clinics may contact the State office or the mail order vendor to follow up on orders that do have shipping dates within 20 days after the order's prescription date.

# Disaster Plan

#### Warrant Issuance in Cases of Natural Disaster or Emergencies

During a natural disaster or emergency, the state agency will be responsible for coordinating the needs of the disaster area.

Local agencies shall assess the vendor/s' capability to be operational during the emergency or disaster situation. Local agencies shall update the state office on the status of their vendors. If the vendor/s are closed or the participants have no access to the vendor/s to redeem their warrants, the local agency shall refer participants to alternative emergency food sources and the state agency will extend the "last date to use" date on the warrant.

Date:

#### **Lost and Stolen WIC Warrant Report**

- I understand that use of warrants which are reported lost or stolen is fraud and that if I use two sets of WIC warrants for the same month I may be disqualified from the WIC Program.
- I may also have to pay back the amount from the warrants that were reported lost or stolen.
- If the warrants I thought were lost or stolen are found, I will return them to my WIC Office. WIC can only replace lost or stolen warrants two times in a one year period.

Name	Issued Warrants	Reissued Warrants
	For Month:	For Month:
	For Month:	For Month:
	7. 7. 1	7.76.0
	For Month:	For Month:
	For Month:	For Month:

#### **Agency Comments:**

**Participant Signature:** 

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, you may ask for a Fair Hearing. WIC staff will tell you about the Fair Hearings and help you get one. You must ask for the Fair Hearing within 60 days of the date on this form. The State WIC Director, 130 Seward St., Juneau, AK 99801, telephone (907) 465-3100, will also help you apply for a Fair Hearing. At a Fair Hearing you, a friend or a relative can help give your side of the story.

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# State of Alaska Department of Health Social Services Division of Public Health Section of Maternal, Child and Family Health - WIC Program

WIC 42	WIC 425 <u>Transmittal of WIC Warrant Stock</u>			
то:			Date	
	Enclosed are	the following:		
	Quantity	Description	From	То
			Ву	
			Title	
		Receiving Re	eport	
			Date Received	
The item	as listed below	have been received in	complete and good con	ndition except as noted:
			Received By	
			Title	

Sign and return original to: State WIC Office., 130 Seward St., Juneau, AK 99801

Sample WIC Warrant

A sample WIC warrant utilized by the state of Alaska is shown below. The warrant identifies the food package, warrant type, and the local agency and clinic that issued the warrant. The warrant also specifies the participant and the alternate's name or caregiver's name, if applicable, the first and last date of use of the warrant and date the vendor must deposit the warrant.



# **Inventory of Warrant Stock**

<b>Local Agency</b>	
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	Starting	Ending	Date	Inve	Inventory	
Box #	Starting Control #	Ending Control #	Received	Date	Name	